

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-19, and 21-33 are pending in the present application. Claims 21-30 have been allowed, and Claims 6-10, 14-15, and 17-18 are allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 6 and 19-20 have been canceled without prejudice, and Claims 31-33 have been added. Claims 1, 21-22, and 30-31 are the independent claims, and Claims 1, 7, 14-15, 17, and 21 have been amended. No new matter has been added.

In the Official Action, dated May 3, 2004, Claims 1-4, 11-13, 16 and 19-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Romano et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,991,595) in view of Robinson (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0031996), and Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Romano.

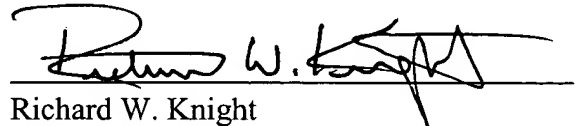
Without conceding the validity or appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections in any way, and solely in the interest of advancing the prosecution of the present Application while fully preserving Applicants rights to pursue the canceled claims in a separate application, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 21 (as well as dependent Claims 7, 14-15, and 17) to include the limitations of otherwise-allowable Claim 6, and Applicants have canceled Claim 6 as well as Claims 19-20 without prejudice. In light of these amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-4, 11-13, 16 and 19-21 now comprise all of the limitations of otherwise-allowable and now canceled dependent Claim 6, and that Claims 6-10, 14-15, and 17-18 now directly or indirectly depend upon an allowable base claim. In addition, Applicants further submit that new Claims 31-33 are also allowable for similarly incorporating the limitations of otherwise-allowable and now canceled dependent Claim 6 as well.

Based on these Amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections pertaining to Claims 1-5, 11-13, 16, and 19-21 (the rejected claims) have been traversed, and that the new Claims 31-33 are not subject to these rejections for the same reasons. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claims 1-5, 11-13, 16, and 19-21 be withdrawn and that these claims and the new Claims 31-33, along with allowed Claims 22-30, be allowed to issue.

CONCLUSION

Applicants wish to gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's allowance of Claims 22-30 and conditional allowability of Claims 6-10, 14-15, and 17-18 in the present Official Action. In regard to the conditional allowability of these latter claims and the Applicants' amendments that have been based thereon (including the addition of new Claims 31-33), Applicants believe that the present Amendment and Response is responsive to the Office Action and submit that the pending claims of the Application are in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and passage to issue of the application at the Examiner's earliest convenience is earnestly solicited.

Date: August 2, 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Knight", is written over a horizontal line.

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